



## Fr. Seraphim (Rose) Speaks

Excerpts from His Writings

### *A Man Not of This World*

Hieromonk Seraphim Rose, co-founder and co-editor of *The Orthodox Word* and co-founder of the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood and Monastery at Platina, California, reposed in the Lord on September 2, 1982 n.s. Born in 1934 in California, he was raised in a typical American Protestant family. He graduated from Pomona College in the Los Angeles area, and later received his M.A. in Chinese (Mandarin) from the University of California at Berkeley.

He first encountered true Orthodoxy as a result of the lecture of newly-graduated Jordanville seminarian Gleb (Abbot Herman) Podmoshensky in 1961. By 1963 the establishment of the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, as a missionary endeavor toward the conversion of English-speaking people, under the aegis of Blessed Archbishop John (Maximovitch) (+1966) had been decided upon. The Brotherhood began with headquarters on Geary Boulevard in San Francisco next door to the Cathedral, which was then in process of construction. The *Orthodox Word* began publication with the January-February issue of 1965. The first issues were handset and printed on hand-operated and hand-powered press. In addition to the publication of the magazine, an icon and book store was operated. Father Seraphim, with his modest smile and meek manner, was there to greet customers and answer questions, and let his "light shine."

By 1967, in pursuance of long-range and long-standing plans, search began for a suitable location for a skete, so that full-fledged monasticism could be undertaken. Vladika John having reposed in 1966, the Brotherhood now had a heavenly patron to assist them in all their righteous endeavors. After considerable searching throughout northern California, the present location of the St. Herman of Alaska Monastery was decided upon. Living quarters and the printing shop were made ready so that the two-hundred-and-fifty-mile move northward from San Francisco was accomplished by Dormition of 1969. For one year the two members of the brotherhood labored in solitude and silence before they received tonsure to the Small Schema in October of 1970. In the previous August of 1970, St. Herman of Alaska had been glorified in the Cathedral of the Holy Virgin the Joy of All Who Sorrow, in San Francisco. The Brotherhood had labored long and tirelessly to bring this about, and to make known the wonders worked by St. Herman, and his importance for the Orthodox Church, especially in America.

Father Seraphim belonged to that rare species, the ascetics. His labors, who can tell? Perhaps only Abbot Herman. But others have been witnesses. Many were the nights when his attention could be had only with difficulty, because he was so enrapt in the Jesus Prayer even while at table. He demonstrated the virtues as few people in our time are capable of doing. He believed implicitly in the teaching of the Fathers that obedience to one's spiritual father and director must be given without question. He seldom ever allowed himself to become aroused enough for one to call it anger.

He built a small hut, approximately 6 x 10 feet, on the mountainside, so that he had a refuge from ever-increasing numbers of visitors. For seven years he was blessed to enjoy this refuge, where he prepared many articles for publication, where he prayed and prepared himself to leave this world, where he was indeed a stranger and a pilgrim, and to enter his heavenly homeland. He was ordained hierodeacon in January 1977 and was raised to the rank of hieromonk on the Sunday of the Myrrh-bearers the same year, so that after eight years of desert-dwelling he and Abbot Herman were able to celebrate the Holy Mysteries.

Father Seraphim was an inspiration for thousands of people. He gave some of the most inspiring sermons ever uttered in the English language. His constant counsel was: "Censure yourself. Never excuse yourself. If you must, or think you must, give way to a weakness, then be certain that you recognize it as a weakness, and a sin. But see your own faults and condemn not your brother!" During the latter portion of his life, Father Seraphim continually emphasized the need for spiritual attentiveness in preparation for struggles to come. He seemed to have an awareness, a foreknowledge, of apocalyptic times ahead. His message was conveyed in the well-known phrase: "It is later than you think."

Writing both in Russian and English, Fr. Seraphim was able to produce a torrent of articles and books in a relatively short span of time—only 17 years—covering every conceivable subject of interest and importance to the Orthodox reader, including lives of saints, Divine services, contemporary problems, and theology. He also translated many works, making them available in English for the first time—incomparable service to English-speaking Orthodox Christians.

Father Seraphim accomplished more for the glory of God and the spread of true Orthodox Christianity than any other person born on the American continent. May God grant him rest with His saints, where the light of His countenance shall visit him. And may his memory be eternal!

Rassophore-monk, Reader Laurence  
(Fr. Seraphim's first godchild)

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*The following letter was written by Hieromonk Seraphim in response to a question concerning spiritual guidance.*

Dear brother in Christ:

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you for your letter. I appreciate the seriousness of what you have written, and I will reply with the same seriousness.

I must tell you first of all that, to the best of our knowledge, there are no “startsi” today—that is, truly God-bearing elders (in the spirit of the Optina elders) who could guide you not by their own wisdom and understanding of the Holy Fathers, but by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. This kind of guidance is not given to our times—and frankly, we in our weakness and corruption and sins do not deserve it.

To our times is given a more humble kind of spiritual life, which Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov in his excellent book *The Arena* (do you have it?) calls “life by counsel”—that is, life according to the commandments of God as learned in the Holy Scriptures and Holy Fathers and helped by those who are elder and more experienced. A “starets” can give commands; but a “counsellor” gives advice, which you must test in experience.

We do not know of anyone in particular who would be especially able to counsel you in the English language. If this is really needful for you, God will send it to you in His time, according to your faith and need, and without your making too deliberate a search for it.

Since you have written me, I will venture to give you a word or two of general advice, based upon what you have said in your letters, as derived from the experience of our small monastic community and our reading of the Holy Fathers.

1) Learn first of all to be at peace with the spiritual situation which has been given you, and to make the most of it. If your situation is spiritually barren, do not let this discourage you, but work all the harder at what you yourself can do for your spiritual life. It is already something very important to have access to the Sacraments and regular church services. Beyond this you should have regular morning and evening prayers with your family, and spiritual reading—all according to your strength and the possibilities afforded by your circumstances.

2) Among spiritual writings you should read especially those addressed to people living in the world, or which give the “ABC’s” of spiritual life—such as St. John of Kronstadt’s *My Life in Christ*, St. Nikodemos’ *Unseen Warfare*, the *Lives of Saints* in general, and Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov’s *The Arena* (this book, while addressed to novices, is suitable for laymen insofar as it gives in general the “ABC’s” of spiritual life as applied to modern times).

3) To help your spiritual growth and remind you of spiritual truths, it would be good to keep a journal (the hardbound “record” books sold in stationery stores are good), which would include excerpts from the writings of spiritual books which you find especially valuable or applicable to you, and perhaps comments of your own inspired by reading and reflection, including brief comments on your own shortcomings which you need to correct. St. John of Kronstadt found this especially valuable, as can be seen in his *My Life in Christ*.

4) Don’t criticize or judge other people—regard everyone else as an angel, justify their mistakes and weaknesses, and condemn only yourself as the worst sinner. This is step one in any kind of spiritual life.

I offer this for whatever help it may be to you. I would be glad to try to answer any specific questions you might have, especially on the teaching of the Holy Fathers, almost all of which we have access to in Russian-language editions.

Asking your prayers,

With love in Christ,

Seraphim, monk

*Reprinted from Living Orthodoxy, Jan.-Feb., 1984.*

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— The life of self-centeredness and self-satisfaction lived by most of today’s “Christians” is so all-pervading that it effectively seals them off from any understanding at all of spiritual life; and when such people do undertake “spiritual life,” it is only as another form of self-satisfaction. This can be seen quite clearly in the totally false religious ideal both of the “charismatic” movement and the various forms of “Christian meditation”: all of them promise (and give very quickly) an experience of contentment and peace. But this is not the Christian ideal at all, which, if anything, may be summed up as a fierce battle and struggle.

— Orthodox Christians! Hold fast to the grace which you have; never let it become a matter of habit; never measure it by merely human standards or expect it to be logical or comprehensible to those who understand

nothing higher than what is human... Let all true Orthodox Christians strengthen themselves for the battle ahead, never forgetting that in Christ the victory is already ours.

Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future, *St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA, 1979.*

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— ...Orthodox Christians of these latter times are indeed spiritually sleeping and desperately need to be awakened by a trumpet of the Spirit like Saint Symeon [the New Theologian]. Those who are Orthodox by birth and habit are not those who will inherit the eternal Kingdom of Heaven; they must be awakened to the conscious fulfillment of Christ's commandments and a conscious reception of God's Holy Spirit, as Saint Symeon so eloquently taught.

— ...For Saint Symeon, as for all true Orthodox Christians, theology is life; the true "words of God" which speak to the Christian heart, raise it from its sloth and negligence, and inspire it to struggle for the eternal Kingdom, which may be tasted in advance even now in the life of grace which God sends down upon His faithful through His sanctifying Holy Spirit.

*Preface to The Sin of Adam and our Redemption: Seven Homilies by Saint Symeon the New Theologian; St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA, 1979.*

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— We must not deceive ourselves: the life of the desert-dwellers of the Northern Thebaid is far beyond us in our time of unparalleled spiritual emptiness. In any epoch the monastic life is limited by the kind of life which is being led in the world. At a time when daily Orthodox life in Russia was both extremely difficult and very sober, monasticism could flourish; but in our time when ordinary life has become abnormally "comfortable" and the world-view of even the best religious and intellectual leaders is shockingly frivolous, what more is to be expected than that luke-warm "spirituality with comfort" with which bold voices from inside Soviet Russia even now are reproaching the free West?

— Everywhere today the disease of disbelief has entered deeply into the minds, and most of all the hearts, of men. Our Orthodoxy, even when it is outwardly still correct, is the poorest, the feeblest Christianity there has ever been ... And still the voice of the Northern Thebaid calls us—not, it may be, to go to the desert...but at least to keep alive the fragrance of the desert in our hearts: to dwell in mind and heart with these angel-like men and women and have them as our truest friends, conversing with them in prayer; to be always aloof from the attachments and passions of this life, even when they center about some institution or leader of the church organization; to be first of all a citizen of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the City on high towards which all our Christian labors are directed, and only secondarily a member of this world below which perishes.

*Epilogue to The Northern Thebaid, St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA, 1975.*

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— The time of the end, though it seems to be near, we do not know. However close, it is still future, and in the present we have only the same age-old fight against the unseen powers, against the world, and against our own passions, upon the outcome of which our eternal fate will be decided. Let us then struggle while it is still day, with the time and the weapons which our All-merciful God has given us!

— Truly, we are far more in need today of a return to the sources of genuine Orthodoxy than Blessed Paisius was! Our situation is hopeless! And yet God's mercy does not leave us, and even today one may say that there is a movement of genuine Orthodoxy, which consciously rejects the indifference, renovationism, and outright apostasy which are preached by the world-famous Orthodox "theologians" and "hierarchs," and also hungers for more than the "customary" Orthodoxy which is powerless before the onslaughts of a world refined in destroying souls.

— Many young people today are seeking gurus and are ready to enslave themselves to any likely candidate; but woe to those who take advantage of this climate of the times to proclaim themselves "God-bearing elders" in the ancient tradition—they only deceive themselves and others.

— Our times, above all, call for humble and quiet labors, with love and sympathy for other strugglers on the path of the Orthodox spiritual life and a deep resolve that does not become discouraged because the atmosphere is unfavorable. We Christians of the latter times are still called to work persistently on ourselves, to be obedient to spiritual fathers and authorities, to lead an orderly life with at least a minimum of spiritual discipline and with regular reading of the Orthodox spiritual literature which Blessed Paisius was chiefly responsible for handing down to our times, to watch over our own sins and failings and not judge others. If we do this, even in our terrible times, we may have hope—in God's mercy—of the salvation of our souls.

*Introduction to Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, by Schema-monk Metrophanes; St Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA, 1976.*

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— As to the fatalism of those who believe that man must be a slave to the "spirit of the age," it is disproved by the experience of every Christian worthy of the name, for the Christian life is nothing if it is not a struggle against the spirit of every age for the sake of eternity.

— Man's freedom has been given him to choose between the true God and himself, between the true path to deification whereon the self is humbled and crucified in this life to be resurrected and exalted in God and eternity, and the false path of self-deification which promises exaltation in this life but ends in the Abyss. These are the only two choices, ultimately, open to the freedom of man; and upon them have been founded the two Kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man, which may be discriminated only by the eye of faith in this life, but which shall be separated in the future life as Heaven and Hell. It is clear to which of them modern civilization belongs...The old commandment of "Thou shalt," says [Nietzsche's] Zarathustra, has become outmoded; the new commandment is "I will."

— ... In the Christian life, the old self with its constant "I will" must be done away with and a new self, centered in Christ and His will, be born.

— Christian compromise in thought and word and negligence in deed have opened the way to the triumph of the forces of the absurd, of Satan, of Antichrist. The present age of absurdity is the just reward of Christians who have failed to be Christians.

— It is futile, in fact it is precisely absurd, to speak of reforming society, of changing the path of history, of emerging into an age beyond absurdity, if we have not Christ in our hearts; and if we do have Christ in our hearts, nothing else matters.

*"Subhumanity: The Philosophy of the Absurd" in The Orthodox Word, Platina, Sept.-Oct. 1982.*

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— Looking at Orthodoxy, at its present state and its prospects in the period before us, we may see two opposed aspects. First of all, there is the spirit of worldliness which is so present in the Orthodox Churches today, leading to a watering-down of Orthodoxy, a loss of the difference between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy. This worldliness has produced the Ecumenical movement, which is leading to the approaching Unia with Rome and the Western confessions—something that may well occur in the 1980's. In itself, this will probably not be a spectacular event: most Orthodox people have become so unaware of their faith, and so indifferent to it, that they will only welcome the opportunity to receive communion in a Roman or Anglican church. This spirit of worldliness is what is "in the air" and seems natural today; it is the religious equivalent of the atheist-agnostic atmosphere that prevails in the world.

— What should be our response to this worldly "ecumenical" movement? Fortunately, our bishops of the Russian Church Outside of Russia have given us a sound policy to follow: we do not participate in the Ecumenical Movement, and our [Metropolitan \[Philaret\]](#) has warned other Orthodox Christians of the disastrous results of their ecumenical course if they continue; but at the same time our bishops have refused to cut off all contact and communion with Orthodox Churches involved in the Ecumenical Movement, recognizing that it is still a tendency that has not yet come to its conclusion (the Unia with Rome) and that (at least in the case of the Moscow Patriarchate and other churches behind the Iron Curtain) it is a political policy forced upon the Church by secular authorities. But because of this policy, our Church suffers attacks both from the left side (from ecumenists who accuse us of being "uncharitable," "behind the times," and the like) and from the right side (by groups in Greece that demand that we break communion with all Orthodox Churches and declare them to be without grace).

— Indeed, if one looks at the state of the Orthodox Church in Greece, we can see that the Ecumenical Movement has produced a reaction that has often become excessive, and sometimes is almost as bad as the disease it seeks to cure. The more moderate of the Old Calendarist groups in Greece has a position similar to that of our Russian Church Abroad; but schism after schism has occurred among the Old Calendarists over the question of "strictness." A few years ago one of these groups cut off communion with our Russian Church Abroad because our bishops refused to declare that all other Orthodox Churches are without grace; this group now declares that it alone has grace, only it is Orthodox. Recently this group has attracted some converts from our Russian Church Abroad, and we should be aware that this attitude is a danger to some of our American and European converts: with our calculating, rationalistic minds it is very easy to think we are being zealous and strict, when actually we are chiefly indulging our passion for self-righteousness.

— One Old Calendarist bishop in Greece has written to us that incalculable harm has been done to the Orthodox Church in Greece by what he calls the "correctness disease," when people quote canons, Fathers, the typicon in order to prove they are "correct" and everyone else is wrong. Correctness can truly become a "disease" when it is administered without love and tolerance and awareness of one's own imperfect understanding. Such a "correctness" only produces continual schisms, and in the end only helps the Ecumenical Movement by reducing the witness of sound Orthodoxy.

— Conspicuous among Orthodox today—certain to be with us into the 1980's—is the worldly spirit by which Orthodoxy is losing its savor, expressed in the Ecumenical Movement, together with the reaction against it, which is often excessive precisely because the same worldly spirit is present in it. ...

— There will undoubtedly be an increasing number of Orthodox converts in America and Europe in the coming decade, and we must strive that our missionary witness to them will help to produce, not cold, calculating,



“correct” experts in the letter of the law, but warm, loving, simple Christians—at least as far as our haughty Western temperament will allow.

— Once Fr. Dimitri [Dudko] was asked about how much better off religion was in the free world than in Russia, and he answered: Yes, they have freedom and many churches, but theirs is a “spirituality with comfort.” We in Russia have a different path, a path of suffering that can produce real fruit.

— We should remember this phrase when we look at our own feeble Orthodoxy in the free world: are we content to have beautiful churches and chanting; do we perhaps boast that we keep the fasts and the church calendar, have “good” icons and congregational singing, that we give to the poor and perhaps tithe to the Church? Do we delight in exalted patristic teachings and theological conferences without having the simplicity of Christ in our hearts? Then ours is a “spirituality with comfort,” and we will not have the spiritual fruits that will be exhibited by those without all these “comforts,” who deeply suffer and struggle for Christ. In this sense we should take our tone from the suffering Church in Russia and place the externals of the Church’s worship in their proper place.

— Our most important task, perhaps, is the Christian enlightenment of ourselves and others. We must go deeper into our faith—not by studying the canons of Ecumenical Councils or the typicon (although they also have their place), but by knowing how God acts in our lives; by reading the lives of God-pleasers in the Old and New Testaments (we read the Old Testament far too little; it is very instructive); by reading the lives of Saints and the writings of the Holy Fathers on practical spiritual life; by reading about the suffering of Christians today and in recent years. In all of this learning our eyes must be on heaven above, the goal we strive for, not on the problems and disasters of earth below.

— Our Christian life and learning must be such that it will enable us to know the true Christ and to recognize the false Christ (Antichrist) when he comes. It is not theoretical knowledge or “correctness” that will give this knowledge to us. Vladimir Soloviev in his parable of Antichrist has a valuable insight when he notes that Antichrist will build a museum of all possible Byzantine antiquities for the Orthodox, if only they accept him. So, too, mere “correctness” in Orthodoxy without a loving Christian heart will not be able to resist Antichrist; one will recognize him and be firm to stand against him chiefly by the heart and not the head. We must develop in ourselves the right Christian feelings and instincts, and put off all fascination with the “spiritual comforts” of the Orthodox way of life, or else we will be—as one discerning observer of present-day converts has observed—Orthodox but not Christian.

*“Orthodox Christians Facing the 1980’s,” A lecture given at the St. Herman Summer Pilgrimage, Platina, CA, August 9, 1979.*

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— The significance of the Catacomb Church does not lie in its “correctness”; it lies in its preservation of the true spirit of Orthodoxy, the spirit of freedom in Christ. Sergianism was not merely “wrong” in its choice of church policy, it was something far worse: it was a betrayal of Christ based on agreement with the spirit of this world. It is the inevitable result when church policy is guided by earthly logic and not by the mind of Christ.

*Introduction to Russia’s Catacomb Saints*, by I.M. Andreyev, Platina, 1982.

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— The Orthodox Christian of today is overwhelmed to open Saint Gregory’s Book of Miracles and find there just what his soul is craving in this soulless, mechanistic modern world; he finds that very Christian path of salvation which he knows in the Orthodox services, Lives of the Saints, the Patristic writings, but which is so absent today, even among the best of modern “Christians,” that one begins to wonder whether one is not really insane, or some literal fossil of history, for continuing to believe and feel as the Church has always believed and felt. It is one thing to recognize the intellectual truth of Orthodox Christianity; but how is one to live it when it is so out of harmony with the times? And then one reads Saint Gregory and finds that all of this Orthodox truth is also profoundly normal, that whole societies were once based on it, that it is unbelief and “renovated” Christianity which are profoundly abnormal and not Orthodox Christianity, that this is the heritage and birthright of the West itself which it deserted so long ago when it separated from the one and only Church of Christ, thereby losing the key to the “secret” which so baffles the modern scholar—the “secret” of true Christianity, which must be approached with a fervent, believing heart, and not with the cold aloofness of modern unbelief, which is not natural to man but is an anomaly of history.

*Introduction to Vita Patrum*, by Saint Gregory of Tours, Platina, 1988.

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— We must not artificially isolate ourselves from the reality of today’s world; rather, we must learn to use the best things the world has to offer, for everything good in the world—if we are only wise enough to see it—points to God, and we must make use of it. Too many people make the mistake of limiting Orthodoxy to church services, set prayers, and the occasional reading of a spiritual book. True Orthodoxy, however, requires a commitment that involves every aspect of our lives. One is Orthodox all the time every day, in every situation of life—or one is not really Orthodox at all. For this reason we must develop an Orthodox worldview and live it.

**"Living an Orthodox World-View,"** a lecture given at the St Herman Summer Pilgrimage, Platina, CA, August 1980; *Orthodox America*, Aug.-Sept. 1982.

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- Do not trust your mind too much; thinking must be refined by suffering, or it will not stand the test of these cruel times.
- Of course, one can always act "wrong" even on a clear conscience! But even that is not a fatal mistake as long as one's mind and heart remain open and one keeps first things first.
- How much our American Orthodoxy needs more heart and not so much mind! I don't know any answer for it, except more prayer and basic education in Orthodox sources.
- Orthodox Christians, surrounded by and already swimming in a sea of humanist-worldly philosophy and practice, must do everything possible to create their own islands, in that sea, of other-worldly, God-oriented thought and practice.
- Above all, may we all grow in spiritual understanding, not "rational" understanding—which I fear is the constant plague of all us poor converts!
- ...the two sides quote canons back and forth, when what is needed is love and understanding—and that statement, I realize, could have come straight from the lips of some ecumenist, which only shows how difficult the path of true Orthodoxy has become in our days.
- Good heavens! What is happening to people? How easily one gets dragged off the path of serving God into all kinds of factions and jealousies and attempts at revenge.
- How much hope there is for those who do not trust in themselves too much and are not overly-critical of others! And how little hope for those whose orientation is the opposite!
- ...psychological trials of dwellers in the last times will equal the physical trials of the martyrs. But in order to face these trials we must be living in a different world.
- I think about...that older generation that is now almost gone, and I want to weep for the young know-it-alls who have missed the point. But the understanding comes only through real suffering, and how many can do that?
- We must be open rather than closed with regard to the Moscow Patriarchate. The whole question of ecumenism and apostasy cannot be placed simply on the canonical-dogmatic-formal level, but must be viewed first spiritually!
- It's obvious that the "zeal not according to knowledge" is becoming a matter of some concern to [Metropolitan Philaret] and for many of our bishops, and I'm afraid the solution to it, if any, won't be easy... I think the quality needed is a certain deep humility of mind that enables one to accept other ways of looking at things, other emphases, as equally Orthodox with one's own.
- Try to remember that all real Christian work is local—right here and now, between myself and God and my neighbor.
- Do you have a notebook for taking down quotes from Holy Fathers in your reading? Do you always have a book of Holy Fathers that you are reading and can turn to in a moment of gloom? Start now—this is essential!
- Now one cannot be a half-hearted Christian, but only entirely or not at all.

Letters from Father Seraphim, **Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society**, Richfield Springs, NY, 2001.

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## **A Letter to Thomas Merton, 1962**

**by Eugene [Fr. Seraphim] Rose**

*I am a young American convert to Russian Orthodoxy—not the vague "liberal" spirituality of too many modern Russian "religious thinkers," but the full ascetic and contemplative Orthodoxy of the Fathers and Saints—who have for some years been studying the spiritual "crisis" of our time, and am at present writing a book on the subject. [1] In the course of my study I have had occasion to read the works of a great number of Roman Catholic authors, some of which (those, for example, of Pieper, Picard, Gilson, P. Danielou, P. de Lubac) I have found quite helpful and not, after all, too distant from the Orthodox perspective, but others of which I have found quite disturbing in the light of what seems to me the plain teaching of the universal Church. I have read several of your works, and especially in some recent articles of yours I seem to find signs of one of the tendencies in contemporary Roman thought (it exists in Orthodoxy too, to be sure) that has most disturbed me. Since you are a Roman monk, I turn to you as to someone likely to clarify the ambiguities I have found in this trend of thought. What I would like to discuss chiefly concerns what might be called the "social mission" of the Church.*

*In an essay entitled *Christian Action in World Crisis* [2] you devote yourself especially to the question of "peace." In an age when war has become virtually "impossible," this is, of course, of central concern to any Christian, but your remarks particularly on this subject have left me troubled. What, first of all, are the real antagonists of the spiritual warfare of our age? To say "Russia and America" is, of course, trivial; the enemy, as you say, "is in all of us." But you further say, "The enemy is war itself" and its roots, "hatred, fear, selfishness, lust."*

*Now I can quite agree with you that war today, at least "total war," is quite unjustifiable by any Christian standard, for the simple reason that its "unlimited" nature escapes measure of any sort. The point in your argument that disturbs me is your statement that the only alternative to such war is "peace."*

*The alternative to "total war" would seem to be "total peace;" but what does such a "peace" imply? You say, "we must try as best we can to work for the eventual abolition" of war; and that is indeed what "total peace" must be: abolition of war. Not the kind of peace men have known before this, but an entirely new and "permanent" peace.*

*Such a goal, of course, is quite comprehensible to the modern mentality; modern political idealism, Marxist and "democratic" alike has long cherished it. But what of Christianity?—and I mean full uncompromising Christianity, not the humanist idealism that calls itself Christian. Is not Christianity supremely hostile to all forms of idealism, to all reduction of its quite "realistic" end and means to mere lofty ideas? Is the ideal of the "abolition of war" really different in kind from such other lofty aims as the "abolition" of disease, of suffering, of sin, of death? All of these ideals have enlisted the enthusiasm of some modern idealist or other, but it is quite clear to the Christian that they are secularizations and so perversions*

of genuine Christian hopes. They can be realized only in Christ, only in His Kingdom that is not of this world; when faith in Christ and hope in His Kingdom are wanting, when the attempt is made to realize Christian "ideals" in this world—then there is idolatry, the spirit of Antichrist. Disease, suffering, sin, and death are an unavoidable part of the world we know as a result of the Fall. They can only be eliminated by a radical transformation of human nature, a transformation possible only in Christ and fully only after death.

I personally think that "total peace" is, at bottom, a utopian ideal; but the very fact that it seems practical today raises a profounder question. For, to my mind, the profoundest enemy of the Church today is not its obvious enemies—war, hatred, atheism, materialism, all the forces of the impersonal that lead to inhuman "collectivism," tyranny and misery—these have been with us since the Fall, though to be sure they take an extreme form today. But the apostasy that has led to this obvious and extreme worldliness seems to me but the prelude to something much worse; and this is the chief subject of my letter.

The hope for "peace" is a part of a larger context of renewed idealism that has come out of the Second World War and the tensions of the post-war world, an idealism that has, especially in the last five or ten years, captured the minds of men—particularly the young—all over the world, and inspired them with an enthusiasm that has expressed itself concretely—and, often, quite selflessly—in action. The hope that underlies this idealism is the hope that men can, after all, live together in peace and brotherhood in a just social order, and that this end can be realized through "non-violent" means that are not incompatible with that end. This goal seems like the virtual revelation of a "new world" to all those weary of the misery and chaos that have marked the end of the "old" world, that hollow "modern" world that seems now to have finally—or almost—played out its awful possibilities; and at the same time it seems like something quite attainable by moral means—something previous modern idealisms have not been. You yourself, indeed, speak of a possible "birth agony of a new world," of the duty of Christians today "to perform the patient, heroic task of building a world that will thrive in unity and peace," even, in this connection, of "Christ the Prince of Peace." The question that sorely troubles me about all this is, is it really Christianity, or is it still only idealism? And can it be both—is a "Christian idealism" possible?

You speak of "Christian action," "the Christian who manifests the truth of the Gospel in social action," "not only in prayer and penance, but also in his political commitments and in all his social responsibilities." Well, I certainly will say nothing against that; if Christian truth does not shine through in all that one does, to that extent one is failing to be a Christian, and if one is called to a political vocation, one's action in that area too must be Christian. But, if I am not mistaken, your words imply something more than that; namely, that now more than ever before we need Christians working in the social and political sphere, to realize there the truth of the Gospel. But why, if Christ's Kingdom is not of this world? Is there really a Christian "social message," or is not that rather a result of the one Christian activity—working out one's salvation with diligence? I by no means advocate a practice of Christianity in isolation; all Christianity—even that of the hermit—is a "social Christianity," but that is only as context, not as end. The Church is in society because men are in society, but the end of the Church is the transformation of men, not society. It is a good thing if a society and government profess genuine Christianity, if its institutions are informed by Christianity, because an example is given thereby to the men who are a part of that society; but a Christian society is not an end in itself, but simply a result of the fact that Christian men live in society.

I do not, of course, deny that there is such a thing as a Christian "social action"; what I question is its nature. When I feed my hungry brother, this is a Christian act and a preaching of the Kingdom that needs no words; it is done for the personal reason that my brother—he who stands before me at this moment—is hungry, and it is a Christian act because my brother is, in some sense, Christ. But if I generalize from this case and embark on a political crusade to abolish the "evil of hunger," that is something entirely different; though individuals who participate in such a crusade may act in a perfectly Christian way, the whole project—and precisely because it is a "project," a thing of human planning—has become wrapped in a kind of cloak of "idealism."

A few more examples: The efficiency of modern medicines adds nothing to the fulfillment of the commandment to comfort the sick; if they are available, fine—but it is not Christian to think our act is better because more "efficient" or because it benefits more people. That, again, is idealism. (I need hardly mention the fact that medicines can become, indeed, a substitute for Christian "comfort" when the mind of the practitioner becomes too engrossed in efficiency; and the research scientist searching for a "cure for cancer" is not doing anything specifically "Christian" at all, but something technical and "neutral.")

"Brotherhood" is something that happens, right here and now, in whatever circumstances God places me, between me and my brother; but when I begin to preach the "ideal" of brotherhood and go out deliberately to practice it, I am in danger of losing it altogether. Even if—especially if—I make use of a seemingly Christian "non-violence" and "passive resistance" in this or any other cause, let me before I call it a Christian act—carefully ask myself whether its end is merely a lofty worldly ideal, or something greater. (St. Paul, to take a pretty clear example, did not tell slaves to revolt "non-violently;" he told them not to revolt at all, but to concern themselves with something much more important.)

The "Peace of Christ," being in the heart, does not necessarily, in our fallen world, bring about outward peace, and I would wonder if it has any connection at all with the ideal of the "abolition of war."

The difference between organized "charity" and Christian charity needs no comment. [3]

There may be—I would not have written this letter if I did not hope there was—a kind of true, though so to speak subterranean, "ecumenism" between separated Christians, especially in times of persecution; but that has nothing remotely to do with the activities of any "World Council of Churches." [4]

You may from these examples, I hope, understand the doubts I entertain about the resurgence of seemingly "Christian" ideals in our time. I say "doubts," for there is nothing intrinsically evil about any of these "crusades," and there are involved in them all quite sincere and fervent Christians who are really preaching the Gospel; but, as I say, there is a kind of cloak of "idealism" wrapped about them all, a cloak that seems to be drawing them into its own quite independent service (without thereby negating, of course, the personal Christian acts performed under their auspices). What "service" is this?—the placating of the modern sense of "idealism" by translating inward and Christian truths into outward and—at best—semi-Christian ideals. And we must be realistic enough to see that the general effect on the minds of people both inside and outside these movements, both inside and outside the Church, is precisely to place emphasis upon the realization of outward ideals, thus obscuring inward truths; and since this emphasis has been made, the path is all too short to the palpable falsehood that "doing good is the real purpose of Christianity anyway, and the only basis in which all Christians can unite, while dogma and liturgy and the like are purely personal matters which tend more to separate than unite." How many of those indeed, even Catholic and Orthodox, who are participating in the world of "social Christianity" today, do not believe that this is really a more "perfect" and even "inward" Christianity than a dogmatic, ascetic, and contemplative Christianity that doesn't get such obvious "results"?

I have, before this, been reproached by Catholics for lack of interest in the social mission of the Church, for holding to a one-sided "ascetic" and "apocalyptic" Christianity; and some Catholic philosophers and theologians have made such accusations against the Orthodox Church itself—accompanied, sometimes, if I am not mistaken, by a somewhat patronizing tone that assumes the Church is rather "backward" or "out-of-date" about such things, having always been "repressed" by the State and used to looking at the world through the all-too-unworldly eyes of the monk. Far be it from me to presume to speak for the Church; but I can at least speak of some of the things I think I have learned from Her.

You may legitimately ask me what, if I am sceptical of "social Christianity"—though of course I do not wish it abolished or given to the devil, I am merely pointing out its ambivalence—what I advocate as "Christian action" in the midst of the "crisis" of the age with its urgent alternatives.

First and foremost I radically question the emphasis upon "action" itself, upon "projects" and "planning," upon concern with the "social" and what man can do about it—all of which acts to the detriment of acceptance of the given, of what God gives us at this moment, as well as of allowing His will to be done, not ours. I do not propose a total withdrawal from politics and social work by all Christians; no arbitrary rule can govern that, it is up to the individual conscience. But in any case, if many may still be called to work for "justice," "peace," "unity," "brotherhood" in the world—and these are all, in this generalized, ideal form, external and worldly goals—is it not at least as good a thing to be called to the totally unequivocal work of the Kingdom, to challenge all worldly ideals and preach the only needful Gospel: repent, for the Kingdom is at hand? You yourself quite rightly say of America and Russia, "the enemy is not just on one side or the other.... The enemy is on both sides." Is it not possible to deepen this perception and apply it to those other seemingly ultimate alternatives, "war" and "peace"? Is one really any more possible for a Christian than the other, if the "peace" is a "total (i.e. idealistic) peace"? And does not the recognition of these two equally unacceptable alternatives lead us back to a genuine "third way"—one that will never be popular because it is not "new," not "modern," above all not "idealistic"—a Christianity that has as its end neither worldly "peace" nor "war," but a Kingdom not of this world?

This is nothing "new," as you say, and a world that imagines itself "post-Christian" is tired of it. It is true that when we, as Christians, speak to our brothers we often seem to be faced with a blank wall of unwillingness even to listen; and, being human, we may be made somewhat "desperate" by

this lack of response. But what can be done about this? Shall we give up speaking about what our contemporaries do not want to hear, and join them in the pursuit of social goals which, since they are not specifically Christian, can be sought by non-Christians too? That seems to me an abdication of our responsibility as Christians. I think the central need of our time is not in the least different from what it has always been since Christ came; it lies, not in the area of "political commitments" and "social responsibilities," but precisely in "prayer and penance" and fasting and preaching of the true Kingdom. The only "social responsibility" of a Christian is to live, wherever and with whomever he may be, the life of faith, for his own salvation and as an example to others. If, in so doing, we help to ameliorate or abolish a social evil, that is a good thing—but that is not our goal. If we become desperate when our life and our words fail to convert others to the true Kingdom, that comes from lack of faith. If we would live our faith more deeply, we would need to speak of it less.

You speak of the necessity, not just to speak the truth of Christianity, but "to embody Christian truth in action." To me, this means precisely the life I have just described, a life infused with faith in Christ and hope in His Kingdom not of this world. But the life you seem to describe is one very much involved in the things of this world; I cannot help but regard it as an "outward" adaptation of true Christian inwardness.

Modern idealism, which is devoted to the realization of the idolatrous "Kingdom of Man," has long been making its influence felt in Christian circles; but only in quite recent years has this influence begun to bear real fruit within the womb of the Church itself. I think there can be no question but that we are witnessing the birth pangs of something that, to the true Christian, is indeed pregnant with frightful possibilities: a "new Christianity," a Christianity that claims to be "inward," but is entirely too concerned with outward result; a Christianity, even, that cannot really believe in "peace" and "brotherhood" unless it sees them generalized and universally applied, not in some seemingly remote "other world," but "here and now." This kind of Christianity says that "private virtue" is not enough—obviously relying on a Protestantized understanding of virtue, since everything the true Christian does is felt by all in the Mystical Body; nothing done in Christ is done for oneself alone—but not enough for what? The answer to that, I think, is clear: for the transformation of the world, the definitive "realization" of Christianity in the social and political order. And this is idolatry. The Kingdom is not of this world; to think or hope that Christianity can be outwardly "successful" in the world is a denial of all that Christ and His prophets have said of the future of the Church. Christianity can be "successful" on one condition: that of renouncing (or conveniently forgetting) the true Kingdom and seeking to build up a Kingdom in the world. The "Earthly Kingdom" is precisely the goal of the modern mentality; the building of it is the meaning of the modern age. It is not Christian; as Christians, we know whose Kingdom it is. And what so greatly troubles me is that today Christians—Catholic and Orthodox alike—are themselves joining, often quite unaware of the fact, often with the best possible intentions, in the building of this new Babel....

The modern idealism that hopes for "heaven on earth" hopes likewise for the vague "transformation" of man—the ideal of the "superman" (in diverse forms, conscious or not), which, however absurd, has a great appeal to a mentality that has been trained to believe in "evolution" and "progress." And let not contemporary despair make us think that hope in the worldly future is dead; despair over the future is only possible for someone who still wants to believe in it; and indeed, mingled with contemporary despair is a great sense of expectation, a will to believe, that the future ideal can, somehow, be realized.

The power of the impersonal and inhuman has ruled the first part of our century of "crisis"; a vague "existential" spirit, semi- or pseudo-religious, idealistic and practical at the same time (but never otherworldly), seems destined to rule the last part of this century. They are two stages of the same disease, modern "humanism," the disease caused by trusting in the world and in man, while ignoring Christ—except to borrow His name as a convenient "symbol" for men who, after all, cannot quite forget Him, as well as to seduce those who still wish to serve Him. Christianity become a "crusade," Christ become an "idea," both in the service of a world "transformed" by scientific and social techniques and a man virtually "deified" by the awakening of a "new consciousness": this lies before us. Communism, it seems clear, is nearing a transformation itself, a "humanizing," a "spiritualizing," and of this Boris Pasternak [5] is a sign given in advance; he does not reject the Revolution, he only wants it "humanized." The "democracies," by a different path, are approaching the same goal. Everywhere "prophets"—semi- or pseudo-Christians like Berdyaev and Tolstoy, more explicit pagans like D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Kazantzakis, as well as the legions of occultists, astrologers, spiritualists and millennialists—all herald the birth of a "new age." Protestants, and then more and more Catholics and Orthodox, are caught up in this enthusiasm and envisage their own age of ecumenical unity and harmony, some being so bold—and so blasphemous—as to call it a "third age" of the "descent of the Holy Spirit" (a la D. H. Lawrence, Berdyaev, and ultimately, Joachim of Floris).

An age of "peace" may come to weary, yet apocalyptically anxious, man; but what can the Christian say of such "peace"? It will not be the Peace of Christ; it is but fantasy to imagine a sudden, universal conversion of men to full Christian faith, and without such faith His Peace cannot come. And any human "peace" will only be the prelude to the outburst of the only and real "war" of our age, the war of Christ against all the powers of Satan, the war of Christians who look only for the Kingdom not of this world, against all those, pagan or pseudo-Christian, who look only for a worldly Kingdom, a Kingdom of Man.

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It was only after I had completed the preceding pages that I saw your article in *Commonweal*, "Nuclear War and Christian Responsibility." [6] There you bring up the topic to which I was planning to devote the rest of this letter: the Apocalypse.

There is, of course, nothing of which it is more dangerous to speak. Futile and overliteral speculation on apocalyptic events is an only too obvious cause of spiritual harm; and no less so, I think, is the facile way in which many of our contemporaries refer to the "apocalyptic" character of the times, and in so doing raise in others deep fears and hopes which their own vague pronouncements are far from satisfying. If a Christian is going to speak of the Apocalypse at all, it is quite clear that in this as in everything else his words must be sober, as precise as possible, and fully in accord with the universal teaching of the Church. In this case I can see no reason why Latin and Orthodox testimony should be substantially different. The prophetic texts are the possession alike of East and West; the commentaries and statements of the Fathers, both Greek and Latin, on these texts are explicit, detailed, and in mutual agreement; and the tradition of the Fathers has been affirmed, after the schism, by both the Orthodox and Latin Churches—in the latter most authoritatively, I would presume, in the person of Thomas Aquinas. [7] The recent book of Josef Pieper, *The End of Time*, basing itself almost entirely on Western sources, is, so far as I know, in no essential point at variance with Orthodox tradition. It is rather a shock, in fact, to read in Fr. D'Arcy's *Meaning and Matter of History* that "not all Christian scholars would accept such a literal acceptance" of apocalyptic literature. Perhaps not, indeed, but that is to say no more than that, just as many Jews did not recognize the Christ of their prophecies, so will many Christians fail to discern the signs of the times with regard to the Antichrist and the end of time. (Many Christians have departed so far from tradition as to believe that the Antichrist will be no actual man, but a vague "spirit" only, much as many modern Jews have transformed their messianic hope into belief in a mere "messianic age.")

But this failure of many Christians is itself part of the prophecies concerning the "falling away," even within the Church itself; as Blessed Jerome said, "Many esteemed as the Patriarch shall fall." For the Antichrist is a deceiver, and too few Christians are prepared for his deceptions. It is thus dangerous to speak of "apocalyptic" things without speaking of the Antichrist and his spirit. It is easy for the weakest understanding today to see something "apocalyptic" in the fantastic destructive powers man now possesses; but worldly power is only one aspect of the reign of the Antichrist—great deceptiveness, such as to deceive, if possible, even the elect, is another and less obvious one. You speak, like many today, of the possible "destruction of the human race"; is this not a rather strong phrase for a Christian to use? Does it not, again, place too much emphasis on the power of man? Does it not, above all, overlook the prophecies of what must come to pass before God (Who, of course, alone can "destroy the human race" He has created) calls men into His Kingdom?

In no uncertain words you affirm, once more, "War must be abolished. A world government must be established." Is not "must" a rather strong word? It is indeed a symptom of the apocalyptic character of the age that the only "practical" solution to the present crisis—the abolition of war—should at the same time be (as I think) totally idealistic. To some this situation gives rise to thoughts of a "new age" or a "new world"; to me, it suggests the possibility that we are, in actual fact, on the threshold of the last days, when all courses of worldly action begin to become impossible.

A "new world"—this is a phrase, I have noticed, that you yourself use. In *The Living Bread* you even suggest that "we are witnessing the dawn of a light that has never before been seen.... We live, perhaps, on the threshold of the greatest eucharistic era of the world—the era that may well witness the final union of mankind." You ask, to be sure (but without giving an answer), "Will this visible union be a political one?" And you even suggest that "perhaps the last age of all will be 'eucharistic' in the sense that the Church herself will give the glory and praise to God by being put to the Cross."

To Christians, who possess the word of Christ and His Prophets and Saints concerning the last days, I do not see how there can be any "perhaps" in the matter. The political union of mankind, however legitimate it may be as a political goal, can only end in the reign of Antichrist; the Church,



beyond all doubt, will be crucified after a good many of the faithful have betrayed Her through the deceptions of the Antichrist. I by no means preach an imminent "reign of Antichrist" and apocalypse that is possible, of course, and Christians at all times must be prepared for it; but no one knows the hour.... What I do wish to emphasize is the fact—I take it so—that, spiritually speaking, contemporary man in his despair of the present and still-present hope in the future, confronted with "ultimate" alternatives and seemingly "apocalyptic" social and scientific transformations (and evolutionary hope), has never been more receptive to the advent of a pseudo-Messiah, a supreme "problem-solver" and inspirer of the bright human "idealism."

In times like these, I think, the Christian should be wary of involving himself in the tangled web of political activity, lest in striving for too much he lose all; boldness in faith and in preaching the Kingdom (above all by the example of one's life), to be sure there is not nearly enough of that today—but caution in worldly "planning," of which we have a superfluity, even (in fact, most of all) in the interest of "high ideals."

Above all, the Christian in the contemporary world must show his brothers that all the "problems of the age" are of no consequence beside the single central "problem of man": death, and its answer, Christ. Despite what you have said about the "staleness" of Christianity to contemporary men, I think that Christians who speak of this problem, and in their lives show that they actually believe all that "superstition" about the "other world"—I think they have something "new" to say to contemporary man. It has been my own experience that serious young people are "tired" of Christianity precisely because they think it is an "idealism" that hypocritically doesn't live up to its "ideals"; of course, they don't believe in the other world either—but for all they know, neither do "Christians."

I think Christians have of late become entirely too "sophisticated," too anxious to feel at home in the world by accommodating their faith to passing fashions of thought; so contemporary Christians become "existential," speak of the "here and now" of faith and spiritual things. Well, that is fine, as far as it goes—but it doesn't go far enough. Our hope as Christians cannot be reduced to the abstract, but neither can it be reduced to the concrete; we believe and hope in a Kingdom no one living has ever seen, our faith and hope are totally impossible in the eyes of the world. Well then, let us tell the world that we believe the "impossible." It has been my experience that contemporary men want to believe, not little, but much; having abandoned Christian faith, nothing can seem too fantastic to them, nothing can seem too much to hope for—hence the "idealism" of today's youth. For myself, my own faith grew rather gradually, as a more or less "existential" thing, until the stunning experience of meeting a Christian (a young Russian monk) for whom nothing mattered but the Kingdom of the world to come. Let the contemporary sophisticate prattle of the childishness of seeking "future rewards" and all the rest—life after death is all that matters. And hope in it so fires the true believer—he who knows that the way to it is through the hard discipline of the Church, not through mere "enthusiasm"—that he is all the more in the present (both in himself and as an example) than the "existentialist" who renounces the future to live in the present.

The future Kingdom has not been abandoned by modern Christians, but it has been so "toned down" that one wonders how strong the faith of Christians is. Particularly all the involvement of Christians in the projects of social idealism, seems to me a way of saying: "You, the worldly, are right. Our Kingdom 'not of this world' is so distant and we can't seem to get it across to you; so we will join you in building something we can actually see, something better than Christ and His Kingdom—a reign of peace, justice, brotherhood on earth." This is a "new Christianity," a refinement, it seems to me, of the Christianity of the "Grand Inquisitor" of Dostoyevsky.

And what of the "old" Christianity of "private virtue"? Why has it become so stale? Because, I think, Christians have lost their faith. The outward Gospel of social idealism is a symptom of this loss of faith. What is needed is not more busyness but a deeper penetration within. Not less fasting, but more; not more action, but prayer and penance. If Christians really lived the Christian hope and the full path of unification that looks to its fulfillment, instead of the easy compromise that most laymen today think sufficient—and doesn't the "new Christianity" tell them that working for social ideals is really more important than following the Christian discipline?—; if Christians in their daily life were really on fire with love of God and zeal for His Kingdom not of this world—then everything else needful would follow of itself.

We can hardly hope that such a life will be too widespread in our time, or even, perhaps, that its example will make many converts—surely not as many as will the "new" Gospel; for social idealism is a part of the spirit of the age, while genuine Christian otherworldliness is most emphatically not. Too, it is more difficult and often less certain of itself—so weak is our faith; altogether, in short, an unappealing goal for outwardly-minded modern man. All of this is inconsequential: ours it is to live the full Christian life—the fruit of it is in God's hands.

Well, I have said what I wanted to say. I should be very grateful to receive a reply from you, if you think my remarks worth replying to. And if you do reply, I hope you will be as frank as I have tried to be. This is the only kind of ecumenical "dialogue" of which I am capable; and if it seems more like a challenge to "combat," I hope that will not deter you. My criticisms, I am sure you know, are directed not at you but at your words (or at what I have made of them).

Yours in Christ,  
Eugene Rose  
Endnotes

1. The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God.

2. First published in *Black Friars*, June, 1962, pp. 266-268. Republished in Thomas Merton on Peace, McCall Publishing, 1971.

3. See Part III above. [This Letter was Part IV of a larger work that is not on this website—webmaster].

4. Eugene here alludes to an idea articulated in a work that highly influenced him at this time: *A Short History of Antichrist* by Vladimir Soloviev.

Although this work clearly contains some un-Orthodox teachings, it is valuable in that it presents a striking contrast between the true unity of catacomb Christians in the last times and the false unity of the "official" church under Antichrist. For a more qualified and thorough discussion of what Eugene hints at, see *Before the Face of Antichrist* by Archimandrite Constantine in *The Orthodox Word*, no. 121.

5. Merton had recently written an article entitled *Pasternak and the People with Watch Chains* (published in *Jubilee*, July, 1959). In response to this article, Eugene wrote to Merton:

"The 'religion' of Pasternak, the author of *Dr. Zhivago*, is that 'new spirituality' that wants something more than the 'small' and 'limited' Christ the Church worships, rather a 'new' Christ more in keeping with the 'free human spirit' of the age. This is the spirit of the man-god, the superman, no longer crude as in Nietzsche, but refined, spiritualized, made plausible as the logical and historical continuation, even the messianic successor, of the bankrupt 'humanist' tradition: a 'new humanism.' This spirit is no friend of true Christianity, but its mortal enemy.

"The language you use in describing the 'spirituality' of Pasternak, though it might seem to have the excuse of being addressed to a 'popular' audience, cannot but cause sorrow to an Orthodox reader. To speak of a 'liturgical and sacramental character' that has little or nothing to do with 'established ritual form' or 'ritualistic routine,' but instead 'unstrained by formal or hieratic rigidities'; of the 'world of God-manhood' and 'the transfigured cosmos' as seen by someone whom you admit to be rather 'pagan' and perhaps 'agnostic,' and who is only in the vaguest sense 'Christian'; of a 'symbolic richness' akin to that of the Greek Fathers, yet 'without their dogmatic and ascetic preoccupations'; of a 'freedom' and 'life' totally outside the Church—none of this can make any sense to a right-believing Orthodox (nor, I should think to a Catholic); at best vague and rather 'Protestant,' it too easily lends itself to the service of the 'new Christianity,' born of Protestantism, Humanism, and natural human idealism, that is now sweeping over the world. My own faith has been nurtured precisely by the spirituality that has emerged from the fires of Soviet persecution; but this spirituality is by no means the 'simple,' 'primitive,' and romantic 'spontaneity' you find in Pasternak....

"The faith of Pasternak is a vague and impotent faith that will not accept Christ, that believes only in 'life,' in the world, dressed up (no doubt from a quite genuine aesthetic interest) in some shreds of the outward garb of Orthodoxy, and hoping, against hope that its idealism can be realized in this world...."

6. *Commonweal*, vol. 75, Feb. 9, 1962.

7. In the manuscript notes of Eugene's letter to Merton are found other comments relating to Thomas Aquinas, and more particularly to the results of his philosophy. When Eugene commented on "realism" in modern Roman Catholic thought, this was in a context different from the Christian realism mentioned in Part II above [This Letter was Part IV of a larger work that is not on this website—webmaster]. "Thomist philosophy and Catholic realism in general," he wrote, "inspires us [i.e., Orthodox Christians—ed.] with a certain uneasiness. Why? In a word, because it is too much concerned with the things of this world. It overestimates the worth of the 'natural' in underestimating the corruption of the natural order and of the human intellect, by the Fall; the 'natural' we know is no longer fully natural. But more essential than this, it aspires to a knowledge and 'wisdom' that are 'heavy' with all the weight of the 'world,' that act as though—for all practical purposes—the world is eternal. The time of the Kingdom has come: in the light of this truth, which is central to Christianity, all the worldly preoccupations of Catholic realism seem almost a

*mockery. Does not this 'realism' say: Let man fulfill his 'natural' self, let him seek worldly knowledge and happiness and temporal improvement, and then look to the knowledge and happiness that lie above these, proceeding from what is humbler and more accessible to what is nobler and more hidden. But if the time of the Kingdom has come, is it not too late to be pursuing these worldly aims? And is it not inevitable that many who begin with the humble will never leave it? Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. The imperative to Christians seems all too obvious: put away all worldly things, and seek the Kingdom. The Kingdom has been 'delayed'; do we then return to our original path, that worldly wisdom to which Christ's message is folly? Alas, with 'Christian philosophy,' and how much more so with modern 'science,' we do just that. Christ is our wisdom, not the world; and in the end these two cannot be reconciled. A 'natural wisdom' subordinated to Christian Truth; a 'natural science' devoted to Christian uses (horror of horrors!)—these, in a 'normal' time, might be legitimate. But the fact that Christ has come marks our time as an extraordinary time, a time in which 'normal' concerns, wisdom and worldly knowledge, must be put aside, and we too must be crucified and made a scandal and folly to the world. Christianity stands opposed to the world. True, there is too the 'world' that is to be saved—but not by descending to its level. Christianity must teach art to paint Christ, not to paint the world in a Christian 'spirit'; science must place Christ in the center of the universe, though it crucify all its formulas to do so (it is in that case that the formulas, not Christ, are wanting)"*  
*On the same theme of Catholic "realism," Fr. Seraphim stated: "It is not surprising that many modern Catholic 'realists' find the traditional teaching of the reign of Antichrist shocking—too 'literal' at any rate. For one cannot believe that everything 'natural' is good and at the same time see a reign of evil as its historical outcome."*

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## Life After Death

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Father Cleopa: The Elder of Romanian Orthodoxy

The Life and Works of PROTOSENGELOS IOANICHIE MOROI of Sihăstria Monastery

Glossologia (speaking in tongues) - Elder Cleopa

About Holy Scripture by Elder Cleopa of Romania

About Holy Tradition by Elder Cleopa of Romania

Magic and Occultism - by Elder Cleopa

On the Presuppositions of our Personal Salvation - by Elder Cleopa

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